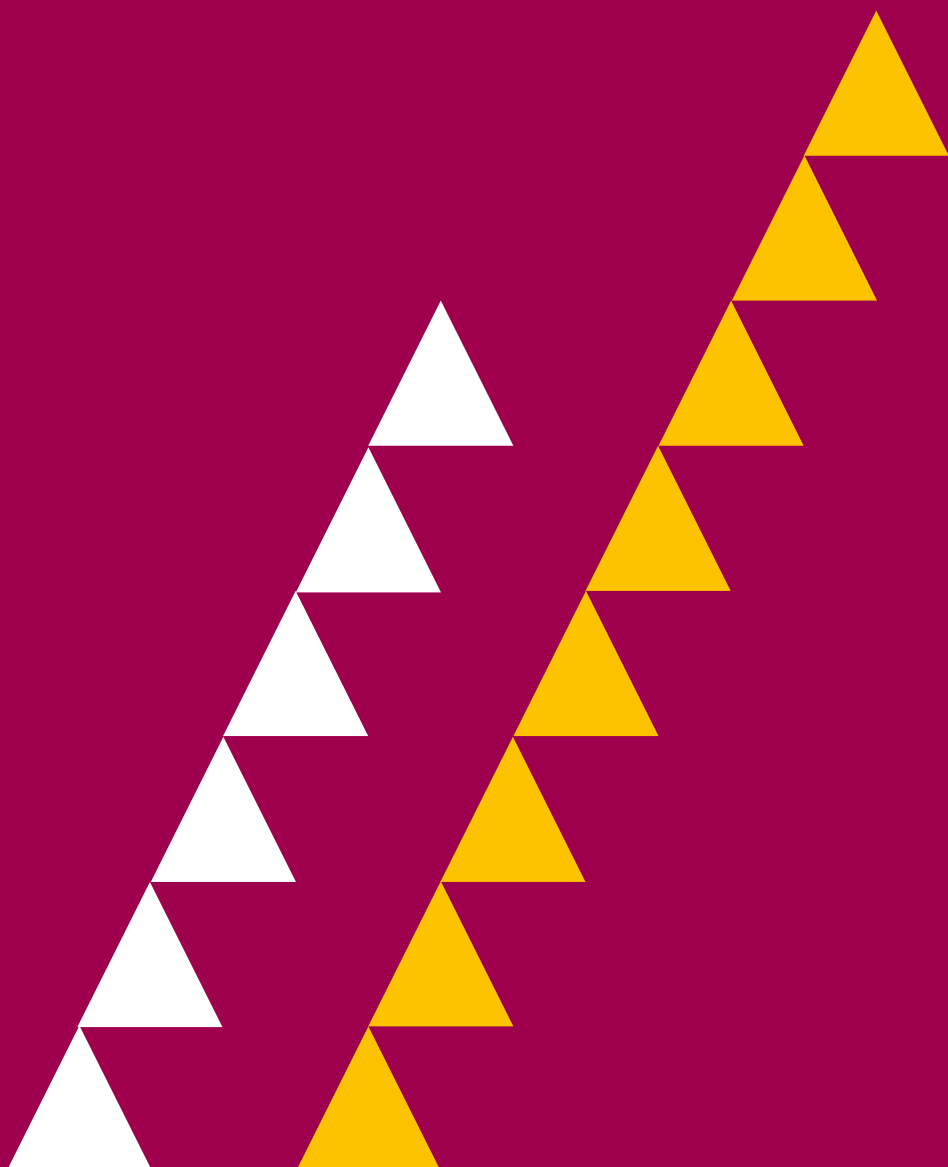# Imperial College London

imperial college union

IMPERIAL AWARD
REFLECTION GUIDE

"It is not sufficient simply to have an experience in order to learn. Without reflecting upon this experience it may quickly be forgotten, or its learning potential lost.

It is from the feelings and thoughts emerging from this reflection that generalisations or concepts can be generated. And it is generalisations that allow new situations to be tackled effectively."

Graham Gibbs

The key to the Imperial Award is self-reflection on experiences to find their impact on your personal development.

This guide provides tools, techniques, explanations and examples that will help you complete the Programme.

Each stream requires you to produce a short reflective submission that fulfils the Award criteria.

To produce those reflective submissions, you'll need to reflect on your experiences, understand their impact on you, and convert them into evidence about each attribute. You'll need to structure your thoughts to present your evidence as you argue your claim, to fulfil Award criteria.

▲ In addition to this guide, imperial.ac.uk/imperial-award has details of the workshops, video guides and more.

Reflection

REFLECTION

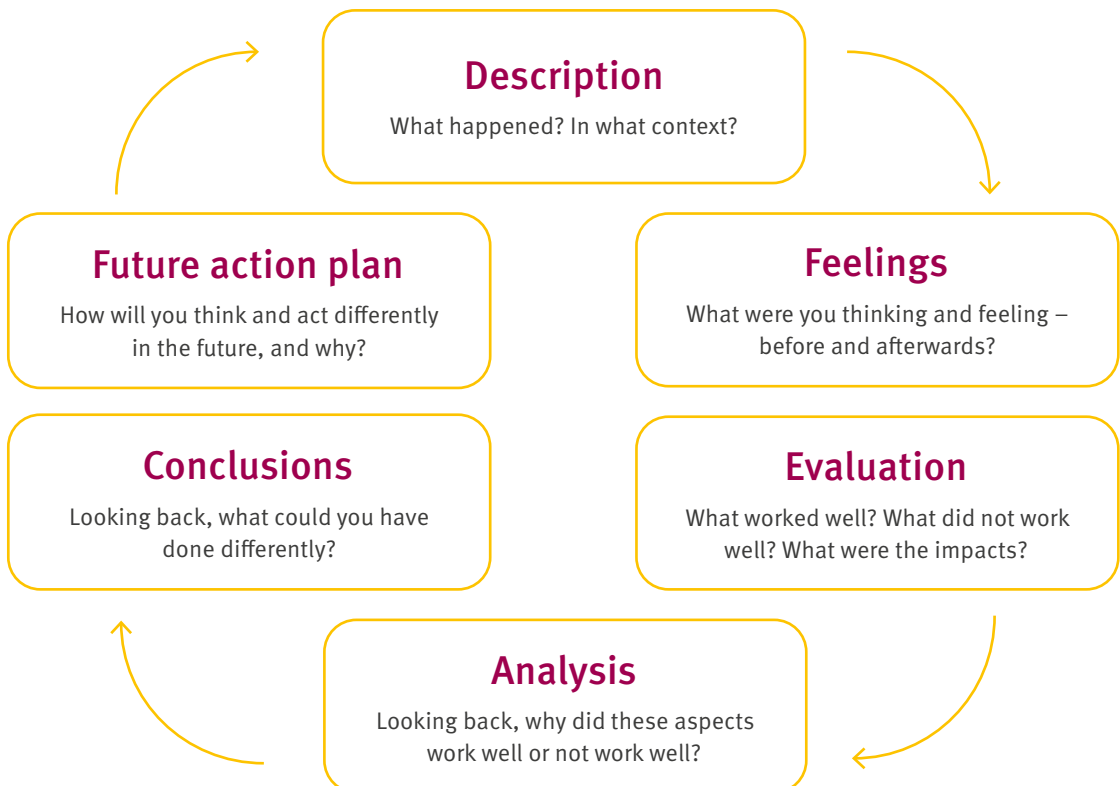Reflection is the personal learning activity of looking at your own experiences to see your own development.

Reflecting requires you to understand not only what you do well, but also to be critical of yourself. It is an analytical cycle enabling your personal development, and helping you become aware of it.

Reflection also helps you to recognise, and gain confidence from, your own development. It helps you discover more about your potential.

PRACTICAL REFLECTION

Use the online Portfolio to record your reflection on experiences, assisted by the diagram of the Gibbs Reflective Cycle below.

Use the self-interview questions (on p4–5) to convert that reflection into evidence for the Award ▲

Description
What happened? In what context?

Feelings
What were you thinking and feeling – before and afterwards?

Evaluation
What worked well? What did not work well? What were the impacts?

Analysis
Looking back, why did these aspects work well or not work well?

Conclusions
Looking back, what could you have done differently?

Future action plan
How will you think and act differently in the future, and why?

Transformation

We all change and develop during our lives, including during our time at Imperial. Our mindsets and perspectives shift as we learn from experiences. This also changes what we do.

During your time at Imperial, as undergraduate or postgraduate, full-time or part-time, you will acquire specialist expertise in your field but you'll also develop your existing or new values, assumptions, opinions and frames of reference. They will affect you, your interactions with others and how you do things. The Imperial Award encourages you to identify not only the changes in you but also their cause(s).

USING TRANSFORMATION IN YOUR SUBMISSION

The Award asks you to discuss the link between your experience, its transformative impact and the attribute.

You can fulfil the criteria by reflecting on:

▲ The definition of the attribute

▲ Whether the attribute matches your current ways of thinking/behaving and how your understanding of it changed

▲ The experiences which evidence your development of the attribute

▲ The reasons why your experience(s) caused you to develop Imperial Award attributes. ▲

▶ Adapting and extending Mezirow's concepts of epochal and cumulative experiences (Ahearn 2018)

TYPES OF TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE

Unpredicted one-off experience, that changes you or your understanding (you are never the same again)

Predicted one-off experience, good or requiring you to get it 'right first time' (you can prepare for it, but will not avoid it)

A combination of varied experiences independently contributing to your development (as you react, cope, adapt, fix)

Cumulative experiences sought from varied activities (purposeful, ongoing and strategic)

Cumulative experiences within one activity (progressing to greater responsibility/challenges)

Reflection tools

These self-interview questions will help you to start linking your experiences to Imperial Award attributes. Use your online portfolio to record these links and your reflections.

If you're not sure you possess an attribute start by asking yourself questions about your experiences (this page). If you think you already possess an attribute you can do the reverse (p5). ▲

SELF-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS, STARTING FROM YOUR EXPERIENCES

PRIMARY QUESTION	KEY ASPECTS
Which of your past activities would you handle differently, in future?	Reflect on activities that feel significant for you: what was the situation and context?
What specific experience caused you to re-think your assumptions, choices and actions?	Why did you need to change your thinking/actions? Did you seek advice/ training? How difficult or easy was it to modify your thinking/actions? What helped/hindered you?
Does this experience show thinking/ actions that match any of the attribute definitions?	Reading the definitions of streams and attributes, what matches the thinking/ actions evidenced by your experiences?
Why did the specific experience(s) helped you develop that attribute?	Why was that specific experience so transformational for you? How do you know?
What impact do you expect to have in future, using the attribute?	What has been your impact on others, or on new situations, since you developed the attribute?

Ahearn (2017)

SELF-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS, STARTING WITH THE ATTRIBUTES

PRIMARY QUESTION	FURTHER REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS
Which attribute(s) do you think you can evidence most strongly when thinking about your experience	What is your understanding of this attribute? Can you discuss the differences between this attribute and the other three in the stream?
Think of **one concrete example** for each of your chosen attributes.	Does your example show your independence of thinking and action in the activity?
What did you do (background and context)?	What was the context of the experience?
How did you do it?	Did you use any training, advice, trial-and-error, group discussions, personal reflection or research as part of your experience of handling the situation?
Why? Give a rationale for the change in you, before and after your experience.	What was your thinking/practice before you developed the attribute? What specifically changed your thinking/practice? What is your thinking/practice now?
What was the impact of your actions/choice/approach on others and on yourself?	What is the evidence of this transformative impact on you or others? Use feedback from others, from observers, from your own reflections, anecdotal evidence or your own observations to back up your argument.
Would you **do anything differently** to improve the outcome? What? Why?	Will you use the attribute to handle future situations/challenges/opportunities?

Ahearn (2017)

Your online portfolio

WHY USE THE AWARD PORTFOLIO?

The online Portfolio lets you use your reflection as evidence. You can use the Portfolio as a diary or journal to list activities, analyse experiences, map the links to attributes and produce an automated Overview or summary.

It is accessed on the Award web page, using your College log-in. It is simple enough to use as a daily diary to capture fresh experiences and track your own development. It is intuitive to use.

The Portfolio Activities and Experiences pages are entirely private but, helpfully, the Matrix Overview can be seen by your personal tutor or mentor, to aid discussions.

ACTIVITY RECORDING

Activities can include anything you engage in, including but not limited to:

- ▲ Summer internships or any work

- ▲ Volunteering, any type

- ▲ Business, enterprise or hackspace projects

- ▲ Life experiences e.g. Parenting or care-giving

- ▲ UROP or postgraduate research

- ▲ Conferences, presentations, outreach

- ▲ Mentoring, tutoring, training

MAPPING

Mapping means selecting, and labelling, your experiences as evidence of an attribute. When you add a new experience to an activity, the new page will list the 12 attributes at the bottom of the page. After reflecting on the experience, you can click-to-match the experience to relevant attributes (see opposite).

The three streams of attributes are:

Independent, open-minded thought

Effective teamwork

Self-awareness and active self-management

THE MATRIX OVERVIEW

When you click-to-match attributes to an experience, it populates a matrix which gives you an overview of the strengths of your evidence for each attribute. You can fill gaps with new experiences. A complete set of evidenced attributes in a stream would indicate that you are ready to produce a reflective submission for the assessors ▲

Imperial College London Imperial **Award**

Overview   Activities and Experiences   Review   Guidance   Bob Student   Log Out

Activities and Experiences

My Activities   Add New Activity

Add New Activity

Activity Name

Enter the name of this activity e.g. Open Day Volunteer

Category

Choose a category:

Description

Add some context to this activity - what's it about? What's involved?

Save Activity

ACTIVITY RECORDING

EXPERIENCES

Adding New Experience to Activity *Community Connection Volunteer*

Experience Name

Volunteering at the local allotments

Date

August 2017

Details

What I did

Over four weeks I helped the bowls club spend some grant money they had been given:

• Helped tidied the allotments and
• Worked with club treasurer to work out gardening budget
• Met with the local scout group
• Ran a fundraiser to build a garden shed

Thoughts and reflection

This experience allowed me to interact with groups of the community I would never normaly have met.

It was interesting to hear the perspectives of people older and younger than me and this has increased my capacity to empahise with others. This was clear when I could act as a go-between during a disagreement between a Scout and an allotment holder - it turned out they actually agreed with each other but were communicating in a different way.

Stream Attributes

Select the stream attributes you think were enriched by this experience:

Independent, open minded thought	Effective teamwork	Self awareness and active self management
☐ Innovative approach:	☑ Communication and active listening:	☐ Critical self-analysis/self-evaluation:
☐ Creativity:	☐ Motivation:	☑ Social conscience:
☐ Practical, intelligent problem-solving:	☑ Awareness of group dynamics and collaboration:	☐ Recognising opportunities:
☐ Enterprising mindset:	☐ Strategic mindset:	☑ Global mindset:

Save Experience   Cancel

MAPPING ATTRIBUTES

THE MATRIX OVERVIEW

Imperial College London Imperial **Award**

Overview   Activities and Experiences   Review   Guidance   Bob Student   Log Out

My Imperial Award

15 Activities created   **22** Experiences recorded

Activities and Experiences															
Totals	20	6	7	8	5	25	8	7	7	3	18	3	7	5	3
Community Connections volunteer	1		1			2	1	1			2		1		
Volunteering with GoodGym	1		✔			2	✔	✔			2		✔		✔
Computing Department Rep	2	1		1		6	3	1	2		2		1		1
Student consultations on late submissions						2	✔		✔		1		✔		
Student Staff Committee Meetings	1			✔		2	✔		✔						
A new experience	1	✔				1		✔			1				✔
Events Officer - RCC Dance Company	2	1	1			5	1	1	1		1		1		
Events Officer - RCC Dance Company	2	✔	✔			5	✔	✔	✔		1		✔		

Using reflection to gain the Award

PROCESS	USING THESE TOOLS AND SUPPORT
1 Recall and record your activities and experiences in your private online Portfolio	▲ Use your memory, CV, calendar/diary to recall activities ▲ Use your online Portfolio as a journal, diary or notepad
2 Read and reflect on the definitions of attributes and the Award Criteria used by the assessors	▲ See Student Guidance for Award Criteria, and this guide for attribute definitions. ▲ Use workshops, mentoring sessions videos, talk to your peers to discuss them
3 Reflect on your experiences, identifying transformative experiences and map them to your attributes	▲ Use the tools in this guide and on the website; ▲ Use workshops; videos; peers/tutor chats ▲ Use your online portfolio
4 Review your evidence per attribute; seek new experiences or re-use steps 1—3	▲ Read your own portfolio, use the matrix ▲ Continue to self-reflect
5 Select the submission method; Produce your reflective submission, self-checking that it fulfils the Assessor's criteria	▲ Check the submission methods in this guide and examples of reflective submissions on the Award system page. ▲ See Student Guidance for the Award criteria ▲ Attend a workshop
6 Submit your reflective piece online. Reflect on the assessor's written feedback. Re-use any prior steps	▲ Use the online system to submit or re-submit your reflective piece; reflect on and follow your assessor's feedback; ▲ Attend a peer mentoring session.

Submission methods

Your reflective pieces can be submitted as one of the three methods below. Whatever method you choose, keep your submission simple and criteria focused.
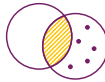
You can mix and match per stream as streams will still be submitted separately. The same assessment criteria apply to all methods (see the Student Guide for the full assessment criteria).

You must submit your reflective piece through the Imperial Award system.

You must appropriately reference any media not created by you. Your reflective submission is about your developmental journey so be intentional about any media that you use that you did not create.

You may change submission methods when resubmitting in a stream. Keep in mind that assessors check past submissions to gauge whether you have understood and applied their feedback.

See the Imperial Award website for more guidance and examples.

	WRITTEN SUBMISSION	VIDEO SUBMISSION	MULTIMEDIA SUBMISSION
DEVELOPMENTAL ADVANTAGE	Practise reflective writing	Practise speaking technique	Practise creative presentation of information
LIMITS	4000 characters per stream	Six minutes total per stream. It does not have to be one take, cutting is allowed.	4000 characters which you may distribute as you would like within the following parameters:* ▲ 1 min video is equivalent to 700 characters ▲ 1 image is equivalent to 100 characters ▲ Icons, symbols & spaces can be used freely.
DESCRIPTION	A reflective essay	Video-call style video of you sharing your reflections.	Text, images and/or short video clips to communicate your reflections.

*Example 1: 1 × 2 min video, six images, 2000 characters arranged as a poster;
Example 2: 4 × 15s videos, four images, 2900 characters arranged as a mind map

The SCART model

A TOOL FOR STRUCTURING YOUR SUBMISSION

The SCART model provides a simple approach to structuring your reflective thinking. You must be clear and concise, fulfilling the Award criteria. Remember that the Imperial Award is not about the volume or success of your activities; it is about recognising your personal development of attributes.

SITUATION/CONTEXT

Briefly set the scene, explain how and why the situation arose, what needed to be achieved, and the context of your claim that you have developed the attributes.

- This scene-setting must be specific and not generalised

- Keep your explanation of the situation/task/context to an absolute minimum

ACTION

A brief explanation of what you did and how you achieved (or missed) your goal or handled the situation.

- Explain what you did or what you experienced

- Highlight the aspects relevant to the attribute(s) by using key-nouns, key-verbs and key-ideas from the attribute

REFLECTION

Evidence that you have thought about what you have experienced, why it matters and that you understand what you did well, what you could improve and how it has affected your priorities, assumptions or viewpoint.

- Show understanding of the impact of your actions on yourself and, where appropriate, others

- Use the reflection tools (Gibbs Reflective Cycle; the Self-interviews) to generate evidence about your experiences and select small examples directly relevant to the attributes you are claiming

TRANSFORMATION

You must evidence (argue persuasively) that, as a result of your reflection, you understand the transformative impact of your experiences in helping you to develop the attributes, enabling you to perform differently in the future.

- Address attributes explicitly

- Explain how you know, personally, that your experiences have changed you

- Look carefully at the Award criteria to see what does / does not work as evidence ▴

INCLUDE THESE IN YOUR SUBMISSION

Situation | Context | Action
Reflection | Transformation

Your reflective submission

PRODUCING YOUR REFLECTIVE SUBMISSION

To achieve each Imperial Award stream you need to produce a reflective submission demonstrating how you meet the Imperial Award criteria in relation to each of the four attributes within that stream.

Before you produce your submission, you should have already started reflecting upon your experiences in relation to the attributes in that stream. The portfolio, overview matrix, Gibbs Reflective Cycle and the Self-interview questions, are designed to help you reflect and make use of your reflection. The SCART model is designed to help you to structure your thinking so that you present an argument rather than simple description. Express yourself reflectively by using the reflective sentence and verb generators (p13&p14).

This table lists Reflective Submission Do/Don't rules, based on the Assessor's Criteria (set out in the Imperial Award Student Guidance). ▲

THE DO RULES TABLE

DO	DON'T
▲ Do use all of the analytical reflective tools to reflect deeply, before you start producing your submission	▲ Do not produce your submission without reflecting on the impact of your experiences.
▲ Do use your matrix tool to select your best evidence for each attribute	▲ Do not try to squeeze in a mention of every activity and experience. Be selective.
▲ Do write using "I", "me", "my", "mine", keeping your focus on impacts of your experiences	▲ Do not use assertions in lieu of argument. If in doubt attend an Award workshop or discuss with peers.
▲ Do explicitly address each attribute in the stream, arguing in support of your claim, with experiences as evidence	▲ Do not list achievements (successful results) instead of experiences.
▲ Do weave a coherent reflective submission for the whole stream.	▲ Do not stretch thin evidence to cover all attributes. Better to seek further, deeper experiences, if time permits.
▲ Do focus on the why, or the reasons behind your feelings and actions.	▲ Do not focus on a factual description of your experience.

Reflective sentence generator

Use this sentence-generator to structure and express your thoughts.

If you wish to SHOW JUDGEMENT

For me, the (most)	important	event	happened when...
	meaningful	idea	arose from...
	relevant	learning	began after...

If you wish to CLAIM DEVELOPMENT

I have	developed	my	understanding of...
	improved		skills in...
	enriched		ability to...

If you wish to SHOW CHANGE OVER TIME

Previously,	I	thought...
Initially,		felt...
At the time,		noticed...

If you wish to SHOW SHIFT IN THINKING/ACTION

Having	read...	I now	think...
	explored...		realise...
	analysed...		know...
	learned...		feel...

Verb generator

Look at the themes and the verbs we've suggested. These are merely a starting point and may help you reflect on your experiences.

Achievement

achieved, completed, improved, enhanced, prevented, produced, implemented, delivered, closed-out, finalised.

Communication

advised, wrote, instructed, presented, edited, chaired meeting, persuaded , pitched, reviewed, listened, learned, adjudicated, claimed, justified, negotiated, reported, professed, acclaimed, counter-argued.

Taking initiative

created, designed, established, introduced, developed, set up, initiated, instigated, re-started, re-designed, convened, proposed, pitched, re-examined, re-evaluated.

Research

investigated, determined, searched, surveyed, examined, catalogued, classified , reviewed, published, wrote-up, analysed, compared, presented, queried, hypothesised.

Organising and planning

recognised, arranged, budgeted, verified, scheduled, planned, produced , checked, recast, replenished, delegated, devolved, involved, re-organised, accounted, reported, recruited.

Interpersonal

advised, facilitated, collaborated, proposed, trusted, evaluated, consulted, mediated, handled , negotiated, welcomed, hosted, consoled, cheered, commiserated, celebrated, diversified, recognised, acknowledged, introduced.

Advice and clarifications

An activity gives you the opportunity to gain experience. The activity of being an academic representative could give experiences of committee work communication, actively listening to individual students' concerns and with being strategic to create rule changes.

An experience is gained during an activity, having an impact on you, shaping your subsequent thoughts and actions.

Evidence (to support your claim to the Award) is composed of personal experiences analysed to discover why they converted you from your old set of assumptions and behaviours towards your newer behaviours, ideas and actions.

Definitions of streams and attributes The attribute framework is there to help you align your understanding of the attributes with the Imperial Award definitions.

The Assessor's Criteria can be found in the Student Guidance. Produce and review your submission with these criteria in mind.

Private Feedback from the Assessor panel is given online on every submission, helping you decide what to do next.

There are multiple **Assessment Cycles** per year (the submission schedule is available on the Imperial Award system page). Different Assessors may contribute on different cycles. Students are free to submit and resubmit amended pieces at multiple cycles.

Your online **Portfolio** can also be used daily/weekly as a diary or journal for capturing your thoughts/reactions to experiences as you have them.

The Portfolio has a **Mapping tool,** for matching attributes to your experiences.

An automatic **Matrix Overview** is generated when you use the Mapping tool in the Portfolio. It shows your strongest evidence.

Self-interview tools, the SCART Model and the **Reflective Sentence Generator** are optional tools to use and re-use when doing reflection and again when structuring your reflective piece.

Within a stream, your re-submitted pieces are considered as revisions of your initial submission, and thus there is no concern over self-plagiarism. (You can re-use earlier content, in a given stream) ▲

THE IMPERIAL AWARD FRAMEWORK

**Stream one
Independent,
open-minded thought**

Thinking for yourself and taking open-minded approaches to situations or tasks means that you draw on, but are not confined by, what you already know from your studies and from your life experiences. The four attributes can be discussed in relation to a single activity or may have been gained/demonstrated across several activities. The emphasis in this stream is on the student's ability to distinguish the different aspects of each attribute and relate them to their own thinking.

**Stream two
Effective teamwork**

Imperial students have a strong tradition of group activities, however progressing beyond mere groupwork to effective teamwork requires an effort to understand teams, develop teamwork skills and apply them to enhance the team's activities. Students will use this stream to evidence their transformation into an effective contributor to a team, reflecting upon their impact on a team's operation and their contribution to team achievements.

**Stream three
Self-awareness
and active
self-management**

Imperial students are known for overcoming intense academic challenges. Many also enjoy a reputation for working to benefit society and for being achievers who can identify opportunities and have an impact, aware of the world beyond their own context. In this stream, students are required to demonstrate their emotional intelligence, to recall and reflect upon their own internal drivers and to consider their impact on others. Students will reflect upon instances and events which demonstrate attributes going to the core of their identity and their ability to manage transformation.

THE IMPERIAL AWARD ATTRIBUTES

Innovative approach	Applying your scientific or research knowledge, or skills, to improve an existing thing, or to develop, identify or establish something new.
Creativity	Generating ideas and applying them to develop an initiative, solve a problem, instigate a course of action, or bring value to an individual, situation, or process.
Practical, intelligent problem-solving	Identifying a solution and justifying it with intelligent reasoning.
Enterprising mind-set	Identifying opportunities and taking risks to develop outcomes relevant in society or that have an impact within an existing organisation.

Communication and active listening	Managing communication processes and the flow of information to ensure that teams work effectively and that there is a shared understanding.
Motivation	Understanding how you or others are motivated, using this understanding to help achieve a collective goal or aim.
Awareness of group dynamics and collaboration	Observing and understanding how others behave and interact; using individuals' different approaches and perspectives to benefit the team; and working with others to achieve a collective goal or aim.
Strategic mind-set	Contributing to effective leadership, enabling a team to achieve its collective goals or aims.

Critical self-analysis/self-evaluation	Considering personal strengths and opportunities for self-improvement, presenting a case or argument to justify behaviour or personal development.
Social conscience	Being conscious of how your values or ethos impacts the application of your expert skills, knowledge and experience and how your behaviour can affect others.
Recognising opportunities	Seizing and exploiting opportunities to further develop yourself.
Global mind-set	Appreciating broad social, cultural or international contexts and adapting behaviours and approaches in a range of diverse situations, showing self-awareness and empathy.

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